

**IMPROVED DATA INPUT****5 Background of the Invention**

The present invention relates to the field of portable radiotelephones, and more particularly, for inputting data into such devices.

- 10 Current portable radiotelephones provide a host of features in addition to that of making and receiving telephone calls. Such additional features include the storing and retrieving of telephone numbers and names from an internal phone book, to the sending of textual messages to other users.
- 15 Current portable radiotelephones generally comprise at a least a numeric keypad, for composing telephone numbers, and a number of additional function keys, for initiating communications to a desired telephone number, turning the radiotelephone on and off etc. It is also common for the numeric keypad to also contain alphabetic representations, for allowing the
- 20 construction of textual messages. Typically, each numeric key represents three alphabetic characters, for example, the numeric key '2' often also represents characters 'A', 'B' and 'C'. During the construction of a textual message, each press of a numeric key causes a display to cycle through each character represented by that key. For example, a first press of numeric key
- 25 '2' would cause the character 'A' to be displayed, a second press would cause the character 'B' to be displayed and so on. When the desired character is displayed, a further character may be entered either after a short delay, or by pressing another key. In this way textual messages may be constructed. A textual message may then be transmitted to another user in a variety of ways
- 30 which will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

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One problem with the above method is that the construction of textual messages is somewhat arduous since each key may require multiple presses in order to select the required character.

5 In order to overcome this problem, some radiotelephones now comprise typewriter style keyboards. Whilst allowing the easier entry of text, such keyboards are large and cumbersome. Radiotelephones incorporating such keyboards are thus also large. Reducing the size of such a keyboard, however, makes it increasingly difficult to select the required key, since the  
10 keys of the keyboard become smaller than the size of a finger tip, and results in an increased chance of the wrong key being pressed.

Accordingly, one aim of the present invention is to provide improved data input means for use with a portable radiotelephone.

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#### Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided an apparatus for selecting an item from a predetermined set of items, the  
20 apparatus comprising: a user interface comprising an input having a plurality of actuators, and an output; control means for controlling the user interface to provide a first menu selection comprising a plurality of items not exceeding the number of actuators; and selection means responsive to operation of the actuators for selecting the item from the menu associated with the operated  
25 actuator; wherein the control means controls the user interface to provide a further menu selection in response to selection of an item, at least one item of the further menu selection representing a subset of the selected item.

This has the advantage of allowing easy menu selection with a restricted  
30 number of actuators.

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The items may, for example, include menu options or functions. Alternatively, they may include a character set.

When the items are characters, the invention has the advantage of allowing  
5 easy entry of alphanumeric data into a portable radiotelephone without  
requiring a large keyboard. Additionally, the requirement for multiple presses  
of numeric keys associated with alphabetic characters is also removed. The  
present invention is particularly advantageous for portable radiotelephones or  
similar devices which do not have a keyboard due to their small size. In  
10 addition, the present invention provides a quick, accurate and efficient way of  
entering data in a single-handed operation.

The present invention also has advantages over pen-entry systems, such as  
character recognition systems, wherein a pen-like element is wiped over a  
15 touch sensitive pad and a controller attempts to interpret the movements  
made in order to recognise the character being written. These systems are  
inherently slow and difficult to use and require the user to make precise  
movements to ensure the correct character is recognised. Failure to make  
precise movements often leads to the recognition of an erroneous character.  
20 In such systems, the pen-like element is easily lost, rendering data input  
extremely difficult.

Advantageously, the number of selectable choices presented to the user is  
limited to the number of actuators of the input device. By limiting the number  
25 of selectable choices in this way, the device allows any selectable choice to  
be made with minimum user input.

The present invention may also be implemented to allow full or partial control  
of a portable radiotelephone, thereby eliminating the need for a data input  
30 keypad.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a  
method for controlling a user interface to select an item from a predetermined

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set of items, the user interface comprising an input having a plurality of actuators, and an output; the method comprising: controlling the user interface to provide a first menu selection comprising a plurality of items not exceeding the number of actuators; in response to operation of the actuators, selecting the item from the menu associated with the operated actuator; controlling the user interface to provide a further menu selection in response to selection of an item, at least one item of the further menu selection representing a subset of the selected item.

#### 10 Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a diagram showing a representation of the directional input controls of a joystick input device;

Figure 2 is a diagram showing a typical character set for use with a portable radiotelephone;

Figure 3 is a diagram showing an arrangement of menu items and submenus according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a diagram showing a further arrangement of menu items and submenus according to a further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a block diagram showing a portable radiotelephone according to the present invention;

Figure 6 is a flow diagram showing an example of how the controller of Figure 5 operates according to one embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 7 shows a number of portable radiotelephones incorporating the present invention.

#### Detailed Description of the Invention

Figure 1 is a diagram showing a representation of the directional input controls of a joystick device having nine defined positions 100 to 108. The

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Each of the blocks 301 to 308 represents a sub-set of the character set shown in Figure 2. For example, block 308 represents the characters A to G, block 306 represents the characters H to N etc. A user may select any one of the blocks 301 to 308 using the joystick device. As the joystick device is pushed, the block which corresponds to the direction in which the joystick device was pushed is highlighted. For example if the user wants to choose the character 'D' for inclusion in a text message, the joystick device is pushed upwards and block 308 is highlighted. Highlighting may take the form of inverting the pixels representing that block, displaying a border around the block, or such like. As the joystick device is moved around, a block is highlighted according to the position of the joystick device. When the desired block is highlighted, the user can select the highlighted block.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the selection of a desired block is achieved by maintaining the joystick device in the position corresponding to the desired block for a given time period. For example, to select the block 308, the user first of all pushes the joystick device upwards, which highlights the block 308. By maintaining the pressure on the joystick device in the same direction for, for example, 0.5 seconds, the highlighted block is selected. The time period required before selection takes place is dependent on user preferences. For example, an experienced user may wish the time period to be decreased, thereby increasing the speed at which data can be input. Alternatively, a novice user may wish the time period to be increased. Preferably, the time period is user selectable, with a default setting of around 0.5 to 1.5 seconds. In another embodiment of the present invention, the user selects a block, after first highlighting the block, by allowing the joystick device to return to its neutral position 108. If the joystick device is left in the neutral position for a short period of time, the currently highlighted block is selected. Alternatively, the user may press a selection button to select the current highlighted block. The selection button may or may not form part of the joystick device, or may be activated by pushing downwards on the joystick device axis.

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Figures 3b to 3i show examples of a number of submenu screens which may be used according to the present invention. Using the selection methods outlined above, it is clear how any character from the character set shown in Figure 2 can be selected using only two joystick movements. This provides both a quick and an accurate way of inputting alphanumeric characters to a device such as a portable radiotelephone. Through practice, a user may quickly become adept in selecting the desired characters through appropriate joystick movements, much in the way that writing is learned. In particular, this method of data entry is particularly advantageous in portable radiotelephones which do not have a keypad, for example on very small or wearable devices, where the size of an incorporated keypad would be too small to operate using the fingers.

Each of submenu screens shown in Figure 3 preferably include at least one blank block. Figure 3b, for example, shows the presence of a blank block in

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It is apparent that the techniques described above can be used for a wide range of uses, from constructing textual messages, to controlling the entire or partial functionality of a portable radiotelephone. Such a system could be used to replace the need for a keypad on a portable radiotelephone, with all control and data input effected by the joystick device.

Figure 5 is a block diagram showing a portable radiotelephone 500 according to the present invention. A display device 501 is used for displaying or presenting textual or graphical information to a user. In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the display device could be

complemented by, or even replaced by, a speech synthesiser or other sensory means. The display device is connected to and controlled by a controller 502. The controller 502 accepts control signals from a joystick or other input device 503. The controller interprets the signals from the joystick device 503 which are made in response to information presented to the user on the display device 501. Optionally, a keypad 506 may also be connected to the controller 502. Such a keypad may be used for the inputting of further control signals, such as switching the portable radiotelephone on or off, or other typical functions found on such devices. A memory 504 is also connected to the controller 502. The memory 504 may be used to store, for example, textual messages constructed by the user, received messages from external users, user options, factory defaults etc. Finally, a telephone function module 505 is connected to the controller 502. The telephone function module 505 enables communication to be established with a telecommunications network, enabling calls to be made and received, textual or graphical messages to be sent or received, etc. The telephone function module 505 provides the typically functionality expected to found on a portable radiotelephone, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

Figure 6 is a flow diagram showing an example of how the controller 502 of Figure 5 operates according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Step 600 causes a menu screen to be presented to the user, via the display device 401. In step 601, the controller 402 interprets movements made on the joystick device 403 to control the highlighting of menu items, as described above. The controller 402 decides when a selection of a menu item has been made according to the methods outlined above. Step 602 checks to see whether the menu or item selected has any associated submenu screens associated therewith. If a submenu screen is associated with the menu item selected, step 603 causes that submenu screen to be displayed. The user is then free to select an item from the submenu screen according to step 601. If, however, there is no submenu screen associated with the item selected, step

604 causes the function represented by the selected menu item to be performed, or selects the data represented by that menu item. The process is then repeated.

- 5 Although the present invention is described above with reference to one level of subscreen, it will be apparent that any number or arrangement of submenu screens could be used, providing that the lowest level of subscreen allows selection of a single character, number or function etc. In this way, complex character sets, such as Chinese, can be quickly and easily be used.

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